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- (1) 2006 LDP presidential race: Clear clash between Abe and Fukuda over Asia policy

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
June 1, 2006

Asia diplomacy: Abe favors India over China; Fukuda stresses need for judging Yasukuni issue from wider standpoint

The differences between Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda are most clear in their respective Asia diplomacy, especially Japan's relations

with China, which have deteriorated due to Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine.

With an East Asian Community in mind, Fukuda in late April advocated a new "Fukuda Doctrine." He intends to restructure the Fukuda Doctrine introduced by his late father, Takeo Fukuda, when he was prime minister (in the mid-1970s). He emphasized the need for heart-to-heart communication.

Regarding the suspension of mutual summit visits by top Japanese and Chinese leaders, Fukuda pointed out the abnormality of the situation, and he criticized Koizumi's paying homage at Yasukuni Shrine: "A judgment from a comprehensive standpoint is necessary (for resolving the matter)." Koizumi has reiterated that business and politics are two separate things. From his experience of working at a petroleum company, Fukuda said, "Creating environments in which Japanese firms can do business overseas smoothly is a job for diplomacy."

Abe, meanwhile, is optimistic about relations with China and South Korea, saying, "The number of exchanges with the two countries is the largest ever." He also advocates strategic dialogues with democratic Asian countries. He stresses cooperation with countries that share the values of "freedom and democracy, basic human rights and the rule of law." He thinks that Japan would be able to seek to check China by promoting exchanges with India, whose economic growth is striking.

He supports Koizumi's visits to the Shinto shrine. He has repeatedly said that Japan should not build a national war memorial because just because it was asked to do so by another country. However, refrained from stating whether he will visit

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Yasukuni Shrine if he becomes prime minister.

Financial reconstruction: Abe prioritizes cuts in wasted tax money; Fukuda calls for both consumption tax hike and other efforts

With the huge fiscal deficit and a possible expansion of social security expenditures in mind, both Abe and Fukuda predict that increasing the consumption tax rate will be absolutely necessary in the future. However, they have different ideas.

Abe said that he would prioritize selling government assets and ending the waste of tax money and that he would raise the economic growth rate by increasing automatically tax revenues. He also said that he would discuss with the public the need for tax reform, including the consumption tax, as well as tax hikes. He has not clearly mentioned an increase in the consumption tax rate. Abe's view is that every effort should be made before raising the consumption tax rate, which is similar to the thinking of LDP policy affairs chief Hidenao Nakagawa, who supports Abe, and Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Heizo Takenaka.

Asked about which was needed first, such efforts or a consumption tax hike, Fukuda responded: "The question is not that which should be conducted first. If possible, both should be implemented." He also said:

"If the economy recovers, the interest rate will rise, the tax revenue will increase and the interest payments will expand. As a result, the balance will come out even. It's right to sell national properties, but I don't expect much for it. Another thing we can do is to increase the consumption tax rate. It is necessary to pay off the national debt by doing such things."

Fukuda's view is close to that of Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki.

Social divide issue: Abe calls for creating society that would give another chance; Fukuda emphasizes Japanese style stability

There are gaps between Abe and Fukuda in their ideas for

resolving the widening social divide.

Abe favors an American style society, which gives people who fail another chance to try again. He heads a council to promote the cause of giving people another chance to try again.

Abe's perception on the present situation is that many Japanese people support the view that it is only natural that there are income disparities between those who make efforts and those who do not. He believes that the economy and national power will strengthen through fair competition. He underscored that he would create a society in which nobody would be left behind.

Fukuda pointed out: "The gaps between Tokyo and local districts have widened more and more. There should be regular employment." He thinks that narrowing the social gap is a key element in setting economic policy. He aims to create a conventional Japanese style society that would attach importance to "a stable life."

(2) Fertility rate sinks to record low of 1.25, given late

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marriage, maternity

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 3) (Excerpts)  
June 2, 2006

Birthrate drops in 45 prefectures

The nation's total fertility rate in 2005 sank to a record low of 1.25, with fewer women marrying young and giving birth soon after marriage. The number of babies born to those in their early 30s also dropped significantly, marking the first decrease in six years.

According to the Population Survey Report for 2005, the average age at which women get married for the first time rose to 28.0, up 0.2 from the previous year and 1.7 over a decade ago. This result shows that an increasing number of women have designed life plans giving no priority to marriage.

The average age at which men get married also surged by 0.2. A total of 714,261 couples were married in 2005, marking a yearly drop for the fourth year in a row.

The average age at which women give birth for the first time rose to 29.1 in 2005, up 0.2 over the previous year. The figure shot up 3.4 over the past 30 years.

On a prefectural basis, the birthrate dropped in 46 prefectures, excluding Fukui and Kochi, although the corresponding figure was 30 in 2004. This trend has begun to be observed even in rural areas, but the situation in urban areas is quite serious. The fertility rate in Tokyo was as low as 0.98. The environment for child-rearing, such as a shortage of day nurseries, has been deteriorating.

How to raise funds left as thorny issue for measures to halt birthrate decrease

The government and the ruling parties are greatly alarmed about the steady decline in the birthrate. The government plans to come up this month with a package of measures aimed at reversing the downward trend, including increased financial assistance for families with young children; a deduction on taxable income in accordance with the number of children; and a reduced burden of expenses for maternal health checks. It is not easy, though, for the government to expand outlays, given the ongoing fiscal reform.

For instance, if child-support allowances are raised uniformly by 10,000 yen, approximately 400 billion yen would be needed to finance this measure. The government might be pressed to take drastic measures, such as a plan to cut social security payments to the elderly and use the money to finance measures to combat

the falling birthrate. In addition to public assistance, the government also intends to take measures to improve the work environment to enable women to juggle a job and motherhood by involving corporations.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said: "We must take the latest finding seriously." Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe expressed his concern, saying: "Our future economic society will be unavoidably affected in a negative way." Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare Jiro Kawasaki commented: "Young people who

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failed to get jobs during the past decade contributed to lowering the birthrate." State Minister in Charge of Measures for Declining Birthrate Kuniko Inoguchi emphatically said: "We will do everything that we can."

Figure 1.25 as warning for the nation

The government took up the issue of declining birthrate for the first time in the annual lifestyle white paper for fiscal 1992. The birthrate at that time was at the 1.5% level. Though using modest expressions, the white paper sounded a warning about the effect of the declining birthrate on the economy and society.

Since then, 14 years have passed. In 2004, the government introduced a new pension system designed to reduce even pension payments for elderly subscribers to meet the needs of the aging society with fewer children. But the birthrate rate has declined at a far faster path than expected.

In anticipation of the problem of birthrate decrease becoming even more serious, the government must overhaul the nation's social insurance systems, including nursing insurance, from their foundation. Unless such efforts are made, future generations will be required to pay higher taxes and insurance premiums, and the nation's economic vitality will eventually be undermined. In discussions on reforming revenues and expenditures, as well, the government and the ruling parties must thoroughly discuss measures to reduce pension and medical fee payments.

The government failed to come up with effective policy measures to halt the declining birth rate over the past 14 years despite the warning in the white paper. Taking the latest finding as a wake-up call for Japan, the government should take every possible measure. The ratio of financial disbursements for child-support allowances to gross domestic product (GDP) is 0.6% in the case of Japan, but the rates in Sweden and France, whose birthrates are improving, are slightly less than 3%. The central and local governments, both under the weight of heavy debts, must utilize wisdom and innovative ideas to that end.

(3) Editorial: Peace cooperation atop priority for dispatched SDF team

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
June 2, 2006

A disaster relief team composed of some 50 Self-Defense Force personnel has left the Komaki base in Aichi Prefecture for earthquake-hit Java, Indonesia, to engage in medical support. They left aboard Air Self-Defense Force C-130 transport planes. Once arriving in Java on June 2, the members will engage in medical activities to prevent epidemics and other efforts in cooperation with some 20 advance-team members.

The SDF's humanitarian assistance has won local trust at various parts of the world. We would like to see the SDF members give full play to their ability in Java, as well.

The devastated areas are suffering from rapidly deteriorating sanitary conditions and a delay in relief efforts arriving. The government must beef up the SDF team as necessary to give maximum support.

Japan decided on May 28, the day after the earthquake had hit Indonesia, to extend 10 million dollars (1.1 billion yen) in grant aid and send a 25-member disaster relief medical team. On the night of May 29, Japan decided to send an SDF team in accordance with the Japan Disaster Relief Team Law in compliance with a request from the Indonesian government. The SDF team left Japan in just three days after the government decision.

In the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster in December 2004, Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels on the fuel supply mission in the area rushed to a devastated area to recover bodies. But it took over 10 days for the first Air Self-Defense team to depart from Japan. Moreover, a total of 1,000 troops from the Ground, Maritime, and Air Self-Defense Forces were not able to provide support for about a month after the tsunami disaster, exposing poor readiness.

The dispatch this time was generally free from problems in stark contrast to the tsunami mission, which was far larger in size, however. It was probably not completely unconnected with the shift in March to the integrated operational system under the Joint Staff chief. All three forces must combine their innovative ideas so that they can provide assistance more speedily and effectively.

In Indonesia, teams from such countries as China, Thailand, and Malaysia are providing assistance, in addition to the US military's full-fledged medical services. The US military has reportedly set up simple hospital facilities on devastated soccer grounds where surgery can be performed. How a country responds to an emergency situation in another country can determine the international community's view of its dependability. It could dictate the country's security environment as well.

Japan must extend visible and massive support to meet the needs. But international peace cooperation is not one of the SDF's primary duties. The SDF is allowed to engage in international peace cooperation to the extent that it does not hamper the main SDF duties, according to a provision. This makes it difficult for Japan to make all-out efforts. Lawmakers are to blame for ignoring the need to make necessary changes to the legislation.

(4) Japan also in need of a "Third Way" - a lesson from Blair administration

MAINICHI (Page 4) (Abridged)  
Evening, May 31, 2006

By Jiro Yamaguchi, professor of public administration, Hokkaido University

The United Kingdom's Labor Party led by Tony Blair took over the reins of government in 1999, achieving a historic victory in the general election after serving as the major opposition party for 18 years. Blair's slogan was the "Third Way." It was preceded by the post-WWII "First Way" to turn the UK into a cradle-to-grave welfare state and Margaret Thatcher's "Second Way" to pursue a small government. Blair came up with the "Third Way" to correct the social mess after the small-government policy course that followed the welfare-oriented big-government policy line, which also brought about harmful effects.

The "Third Way" was intended to build a sustainable welfare state

amid fierce global economic competition. Experiencing reforms for a small government 20 years earlier than Japan, the UK had many social problems, such as a growing number of poor people and jobless youths. Blair tried to find the government's role in setting the stage for ensuring reemployment for people facing adversity to give them some hope. The Blair administration came up with specific policies, such as cutting taxes for low-income earners, extending job assistance to young people, raising the

level of elementary and secondary education, and giving child support to working mothers. For instance, the administration has introduced a system called the Child Trust Fund enabling each newborn child to receive up to 500 pounds from the government and parents to save up to 1,200 pounds a year tax-free until the child reaches 18.

Concrete steps, not rhetoric, characterize British policy.

The administration has also achieved significant results in advancing decentralization and fostering civic groups, such as nonprofit organizations, making Britain's stagnant and tumultuous image a thing of the past.

But Blair also made fatal mistakes. Because of his approach of directly talking to the public through the media to garner support, Blair ended up telling a lie about Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction to justify the Iraq war. His administration has also turned the UK into a surveillance society by obligating each citizen to carry an ID card in the name of security. Those steps resulted in popular discontent with bloated state power, pushing the Blair administration to the end of its rope.

But there is no doubt that Blair's successor will continue with his domestic policies. The fast-rising Conservative Party is also calling for environmental preservation and improved medical and educational systems, departing from Thatcherism. Welfare state reform, accomplished by the Blair administration, is now a common theme.

Japanese politics after the Koizumi era can learn a lot from the Blair administration. In Japan, the "First Way" signified the monopoly of vested interests by bureaucrats and LDP policy cliques and the "Second Way" the Koizumi reform period. As a result, Japan is now faced with such problems as growing poverty and social disparity. The question is not the size of the government. The government must now seriously discuss what must be done specifically to help support the independence of individuals. Japan is in need of a new leader who can pursue the "Third Way" after Koizumi is out of office.

(5) Reporter's eye column - The world will never forget Unit 731:  
Let's share responsibility for past atrocities

MAINICHI (Page 6) (Almost full)  
May 26, 2006

By Daisuke Yamada

I interviewed persons associated with Unit 731, a biological warfare unit of the Imperial Japanese Army, as part of news gathering crew for the Mainichi Shimbun's project entitled, "A Starting Point of the Post-war 60 years." After the interview, I realized that former unit members and other former soldiers are

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even now wrestling with the issue of war responsibility they harbor. But the Japanese society has avoided facing up to that issue.

Let me make a comparison in this regard between Japan and Germany. The Nuremberg Trials handed down death penalty to seven of the 23 defendants, such as doctors having had a role in human experimentation and other experiments, and sentenced another five of them to prison for life. The trials were done by the victor nations, but the ruling did not end up merely a judgment by the victors. It led to creating the so-called Nuremberg Code, a set of ethical principles for human experimentation. This Code has affected the post-war generations across the world. In 1988, the Berlin Medical Association renewed a self-searching statement that called into question the responsibility of doctors involved in Nazism.

In contrast, the Tokyo War Crimes Trials did not punish doctors and others having a hand in similar experiments because of a

secret deal between Japan and the United States, which wanted to

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monopolize all data related to Japan's biological experiments in order to counter the Soviet Union.

"Unit 731 was an execution group. More responsible were professors at imperial universities who sent their students to the unit and prompted them to carry out human experimentation with test vaccines," confided Keiichi Tsuneishi, professor of science history at Kanagawa University. But the Tokyo War Crimes Trials did not deal with such actions by Japanese physicians. The Japan Medical Association has never issued a statement similar to that of Germany's.

Unit 731 has rarely cropped up as a subject of discussion at home in recent years, but it is remembered well abroad. Professor Franzbrau (TN: phonetic), an expert on dermatology at the University of California, has been studying the damage caused by biological warfare in China. He noted: "Japanese doctors can only shame themselves if they avoid looking at the issue of Unit 731." The professor intends to seek an explanation from Japanese medical circles during a meeting of the World Medical Association slated for October. The International Association of Bioethics also plans to deal with Unit 731 as a special subject for discussion in its conference set for August in Beijing.

"Since I was ordered, I couldn't refuse, but the person before me would have stayed alive if I had not experimented on him," said Yoshio Shinozuka, 82, a former member of Unit 731 responsible for cultivating highly toxic germs and present at the scene of vivisection. Shinozuka spoke of his experience that covered more than 20 years. The most difficult thing for him, he said, was to admit, "The person responsible for the experimentation was me." Even a fellow peace activist told him: "I don't need to hear the perpetrator's story."

A former military doctor, Ken Yuasa, 89, who likewise talked about his experience, has been often threatened: "You shouldn't speak of it." Yuasa was not a member of Unit 731, but he carried out vivisection on Chinese as part of surgery training at an army hospital in Shanxi Province in China. Looking back on those days, Yuasa said: "We were told that the Emperor's military should not be covered by seeing people who were not anesthetized faint in agony during an operation. So we conducted experimentation to get a sense of accomplishment that we had done our job."

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This story may appear eerie, but Yuasa said: "Many people involved in vivisection have really forgotten what they did in the past. No way, you may so say, but such a thing was a daily event in those days; so they simply can't remember." Cruel acts were not limited to Unit 731. Similar acts were committed widely at other facilities, such as army hospitals. There must have been a great deal of Japanese concerned with such acts, but there are few who speak about their experiences of this kind.

Perhaps, people who can speak about their experience, without being overwhelmed by guilty conscience and without fear of giving rise to misconception and antipathy, are scarce. There was one who told me this way: "My friend, after reflecting on his past conduct, killed himself. 'Simply saying, please forgive me' is not a solution at all to what we are suffering from. We need to find our raison d'etre; or we may end up following his path."

Ordinary people easily turned into murderers in a straitjacketed situation where neither opposition nor discussion was allowed, as is often the case in wartime. Someone I interviewed confessed honestly: "I shudder at the thought of what would have happened if one of my subordinates had turned against me." Given that there is no guarantee that postwar Japanese society will never face a similar situation, the responsibility of the society today should be to support them, learn in detail what they did, and share their war responsibility, albeit slightly.

With the end of the war, some 1,100 former Japanese soldiers, including Mr. Shinozuka, were sent to war criminal control centers in Fushun or Taiyuan, China. (Chinese) officials at the centers were polite to them, and there were no officials who spat on them. Instead, officials repeatedly urged soldiers to have a strong awareness of their guilt by reading diaries written by the relatives of those who had been dissected.

Later, most of those soldiers were dismissed and returned home by 1964. Some of returned soldiers organized a liaison council of returned soldiers from China and launched a movement to speak about their wartime experience. But every time they speak about their experience, they are criticized as "having been brainwashed by the Chinese Communist Party." (The council was dissolved in 2002 due to the aging of the organization.) China's polite treatment toward those soldiers might have been the results of political implications. But which of the two countries treated their "enemy" warmly, Japan or China?

Sixty years have passed after the end of the war. The memory of the war is fading away. But shutting our eyes to history is simply to add to our shame.

SCHIEFFER